

Message Text

SECRET

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FM AMEMBASSY SANA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4906
INFO AMEMBASSY JIDDA

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 SANA 2617

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PGOV, PINT, YE
SUBJ: NEW GOVERNMENT

BEGIN SUMMARY) NEW GOVERNMENT IN SANA SEEMS TO BE
FIRST STEP TOWARD NEW BALANCE. END SUMMARY

1. ON 30 MAY YAR PRESIDENT, BY DECREE, ESTABLISHED NEW
GOVERNMENT UNDER FORMER PRIME MINISTER ABD AL AZIZ ABD AL-
GHANI. LIST OF MEMBERS IS AVAILABLE FROM FBIS.

2. FORMER GOVERNMENT CONTAINED 23 PERSONS WITH RANK OF
MINISTER. NEW GOVERNMENT OMITTS 12 OF THESE, AND IN THIS
SENSE CAN BE SAID TO HAVE CHANGED CONSIDERABLY.

3. DESPITE THSSE CHANGES, GOVERNMENT HAS MUCH THE SAME
LOOK TO MOST PEOPLE HERE. PRIME MINISTER AND MINISTERS
FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS, INTERIOR, DEVELOPMENT, PUBLIC WORKS,
AND FINANCE ARE SAME. WITH BUDGET AND POLICE POWERS
IN SAME HANDS, STRAIN OF CONTINUITY IS DOMINANT. ALSO,
AS IN PAST, GOVERNMENT IS CLEARLY BALANCED BETWEEN
NORTH AND SOUTH.

4. FINAL EVALUATION OF THIS CRUCIAL QUESTION IS NOT YET
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POSSIBLE. THIS GOVERNMENT IS CLEARLY ONLY FIRST STEP.
WE EXPECT OTHER APPOINTMENTS AND CHANGES IN MILITARY,
IN OFFICE OF PRESIDENT AND IN GOVERNORATES. HOWEVER,
COUNTING EASTERNER LIKE YUSEFI AS ZAYDI, AND TIHAMANS
JUNAYD AND WAJEEH AS SHAFEI, THERE ARE TEN NORTHERNERS
AND SEVEN SOUTHERNERS IN GOVERNMENT. THIS IS ABOUT THE SAME
RATIO AS LAST GOVERNMENT AND IT'S NOTABLE

THAT NONE IN PRESENT GOVERNMENT APPEARS TO REPRESENT ADSALLAH BIN HUSSAIN AL-DLMAR. JUST AS IMPORTANT, BETES NOIRES OF AL-AHMAR, BASINDWA AND ASNAJ, HAVE BOTH KEPT THEIR POSTS HOWEVER, AS NOTED, FURTHER SETS OF APPOINTMENTS ARE LIKELY TO PROVIDE KEY POSTS TO NORTHERNERS, SPECIFICALLY GOVERNORATE TO MOUJAHID ABUD SHUWARIB AND VICE PRESIDENT TO DBDALLAH BIN HUSSAIN.

RANKS OF OTHER NORTHERNERS WHOM WE KNOW TO SEE GHASHMI REGULARLY, MOREOVER, SWELL DAILY. FORMER MILITARY MEN WITH

TRIBAL TIES LIKE HUSAYN AL-MASWARI, DIRHAM ABU LUHUM, ALI AL-AKHWA, AND MAYBE AHMED AL-RUHUMI VCE STRONG CANDIDATES FOR JOBS. YAHYA MUTAWAKKIL IS IN CATEGORY BY HIMSELF, OF COURSE.

5. MUTAWAKKIL SAYS HE WON'T GET JOB IN THIS REGIME BUT HAS UNDERSTANDING THAT THIS GOVERNMENT IS STRICTLY TEMPORARY, FOR SIX MONTHS OR SO, AND THAT HE WILL COME INTO NEXT GOVERNMENT. HIS FRIENDS SAY HE WILL BE PRIME MINISTER. IN MEANTIME GOVERNMENT HAS SEYYID REPRESENTATIVE IN PERSON OF MUTAWAKKIL FATHER-IN-LAW. CONSERVATIVE, RELIGIOUS SCHOLAR AND FORMER ROYALIST MOHAMMAD BIN MOHAMMAD AL-MANSOUR, MINISTER OF WAQF AND GUIDANCE.

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6. ONE REASON THAT GOVERNMENT HAS BEEN ANNOUNCED BEFORE OTHER APPOINTMENTS WE EXPECT FROM NORTHERN RANKS IS THAT GHASHMI MAY HAVE BEEN EAGER TO MAINTAIN APPEARANCE OF CONFESSONAL BALANCE AT TIME HE DUMPED SOUTHERNERS AHMED ABDO SAID AND ABD AL-KARIM AL-IRYANI. THESE TWO MEN ARE MOST HARD WORKING AND INTELLIGENT OFFICIALS IN GOVERNMENT. UNLIKE ABD AL-AZIZ ABD AL-GHANI, THEY ARE ALSO TOUGH. WE THINK THAT BOTH WILL RETAIN IMPORTANT NON-CABINET POSITIONS -- LIKE UNIVERSITY HEAD FOR IRYANI -- BUT THEIR REMOVAL IS PROBABLY PART AND PARCEL OF SHIFT WHICH GHASHMI WANTS TO MAKE TOWARD GOVERNMENT WITH STRONGER NORTHERN REPRESENTATION AND WEAKER SOUTHERN ROLE.

7. OTHER REMOVALS ARE LESS IMPORTANT. ABD AL-LATIF DAIFALLAH, DO-NOTHING PRIME MINISTER FOR INTERNAL AFFAIRS, HAS DROPPED OUT OF GOVERNMENT ALONG WITH HIS JOB. HE WAS SO-CALLED SEPTEMBERIST, ONE OF OFFICERS WHO WAS AROUND AT TIME OF 1962 REVOLUTION AND, WITH SOME TALENT AND MANY FRIENDS, HAS BEEN IN AND OUT OF CIVILIAN AND MILITARY JOBS EVER SINCE. HE WILL PROBABLY GET ANOTHER JOB FAIRLY SOON, ALTHOUGH LOSING HIS DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER'S JOB DOESN'T

MEAN, IN YEMEN, THAT HIS SALARY STOPS. HUSSAIN AL-DAFAI IS EQUALLY INVISIBLE MEMBER OF FORMER GOVERNMENT. HE WAS DUMPED BY HAMDI AS AMBASSADOR TO MOSCOW AFTER NOVEMBER 1975 ARMS AGREEMENT WITH USSR. THIS WAS PROBABLY DUE TO DESIRE TO APPEASE WRATHFUL SAUDIS; CHARACTERISTICALLY, HOWEVER, HAMDI IMMEDIATELY MADE HIM MINISTER OF STATE. WHEN SOBER, ABDALLAH HUMRAN WILL CONTINUE CARRY MESSAGES TO PDRY DESPITE LOSS OF HIS MINSTATE TITLE. ABD AL-KARIM AL-ARASHI, AS SPEAKER OF PARLIAMENT AND ONE OF HAMDI'S INNER CIRCLE, HARDLY NEEDS MINSTATE TITLE ANY MORE.

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S E C R E T SECTION 2 OF 2 SANA 2617

NEITHER DOES PARAMOUNT SHAYKH OF BAKIL AMIN ABU RAS, WHO EXPIRED TWO WEEKS AGO FROM PROLONGED INTOXICATION. SALAH AL-MASRI WAS MADE MINSTATE IN 1970 AS PART OF PRICE YAR PAID FOR RECONCILIATION WITH SAUDIS; HE WAS ROYALIST MINISTER OF WAR. SINCE THEN, HE HAS NEVER DONE ANYTHING BUT TAKE HIS SALARY AND PLACE IN RECEIVING LINES AT THE AIRPORT. NOW HE WILL HAVE TO CONTENT HIMSELF WITH HIS SALARY ALONE.

8. IT'S NO SURPRISE YUSEFI KEPT HIS MINITN POSITION. HE PASSED HIMSELF OFF FOR YEARS AS SAUDI, GETTING INTO POLICE ACADEMY IN RIYADH WITH SOME FRIENDS FROM BANI YAM, THE SAUDI TRIBE AROUND NAJRAN. ("THEIR DIALEST IS SAME AS MINE, AND I FORGED SOME PAPERS," HE EXPLAINED ONCE ON TV PROGRAM ABOUT MINISTRY OF INTERIOR.) AFTER 1962 REVOLUTION, HE CAME BACK TO JOIN THE REPUBLIC, BUT PLAYED A HIGHLY ACCOMMODATING ROLE IN ROYALIST DISTRICT OF MARIB, HIS HOME. WITH SAUDI PATRONAGE, HE BECAME MINISTER OF INTERIOR ABOUT TWO YEARS AGO, AND HEADED UP INVESTIGATION OF HAMDI'S DEATH. INVESTIGATION ACCOMMODATINGLY FOUND NO EVIDENCE OF WHO DID IT.

9. UNEWYECTED APPOINTMENTS ARE MATTARI, ONE OF SO CALLED FAMOUS FORTY WHOM IMAM SENT ABROAD FOR EDUCATION. HE WAS SENT TO MOSCOW TO REPLACE RUSSOPHILE DAFAI BECAUSE HE IS WELLKNOWN SYMPATHIZER WITH WEST. HE HAS BEEN MINISTER MANY
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TIMES SINCE 1962, BUT NEVER IN AGRICULTURE. SALIH JAMALI, LIKE MATTARI A NORTHERNER, IS ANOTHER MEMBER OF FAMOUS FORTY. HE IS SANAANI WITH ORIGINS IN NIHM. HE HAS BEEN IN AND OUT OF VARIOUS ADMINISTRATIVE POSTS SINCE 1962,

INCLUDING HEAD OF INCOME TAX DEPARTMENT, HEAD OF TEXTILE FACTORY ADMINISTRATION AND HEAD OF CUT-RATE STORE WHICH GOVERNMENT RUNS FOR ITS EMPLOYEES. HE WON'T BE ANY WORSE IN HIS NEW JOB AS MINISTER OF SUPPLY -- WHICH BUYS ALL WHEAT ABROAD -- THAN HIS PREDECESSOR. AHMED HAMDANI, NEW MINISTER OF ECONOMY, HOLDS PH.D. FROM UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAVIIN ECONOMICS AND HAS HISTORY OF SUCCESSFUL EMPLOYMENT WITH STATE GOVERNMENT, U.S. PRIVATE BUSINESSES AS CONSULTANT. HE COMES INTO GOVERNMENT AS NORTHERNER WHO IS FROM SAME TRIBE AS PRESIDENT, BUT HE WAS BORN AND RAISED IN ADEN AND CAME TO YEMEN FOR FIRST TIME ABOUT YEAR AGO. IN SHORT TIME HE HAS BEEN HERE HE HAS PUSHED THROUGH NEW BANK WITH KUWAITI PARTICIPATION AND NEW HOUSING SCHEME, ALSO WITH KUWAITI MONEY.

10. ANOTHER NEW FACE IS MINISTER OF HEALTH ASBAHI. ORIGINALLY FROM HUIJARRIAYH SOUTH OF TAIZ, HE IS NEPHEW OF CONTRACTOR ALI AL-ASBAHI, WHO WAS MURDERED LAST WEEK AFTER BEING HELD AS HOSTAGE BY ABDALLAH ABD AL-ALIM. ASBAHI GRADUATED FROM IRAQ AS GENERAL PRACTITIONER, HE WORKED BRIEFLY FOR IRAQI MEDICAL CENTER HERE AND HAS IRAQI WIFE BUT SEEMS TO BE MAN OF NO IDEOLOGY AND BUT ALSO HAS NO TALENT.

11. ONLY LEFTIST IDEOLOGIST IN NEW GOVERNMENT, IN FACT, IS HOLD-OVER MINISTER OF LABOR AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS, ABD AL-SALAM MAQBIL, A NASIRIST. HE QUALIFIES AS GHASHMI'S KEPT LEFTIST.

12. GREAT DISAPPOINTMENT TO THIS EMBASSY, BESIDES
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IRYANI OUSTER BY OUR SAUDI FRIENDS, IS RETENTION OF BASINDWA AS MINDEVELOPMENT. HE IS NOTORIOUSLY CORRUPT AND RARELY IN CENTRAL PLANNING OFFICE.

13. THIS CABLE MAINLY ABOUT PERSONALITIES.

WE PREFER TRY OVER-ALL ASSESSMENT IN ABOUT A WEEK
OR SO AFTER TALKING TO LOT MORE PEOPLE.
HOWEVER, GHASHMI CLEARLY TRYING MOVE TO NEW
BALANCE IN YEMEN, ONE IN WHICH HE HOLDS ON
TO SOUTHERNERS WHILE BRINGING NORTHERNERS INTO
POWER. THIS IS MOST IMPORTANT DOMESTIC SHIFT FROM
HAMDI ERA. NEW GOVERNMENT PLUS ABDALLAH ABD AL ALIM
AFFAIR, WILL HELP HIM, AT LEAST FOR WHILE.
FUTURE STILL SEEMS UNCERTAIN.
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